

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in this application.

1. (Previously Presented) A method of protecting plants from insects comprising:

applying a formulation comprising partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes and a carrier to plant surfaces growing above the surface of the ground, said formulation having a water activity of from about 0.94 to about 0.98, said carrier comprising water and at least one substance which maintains the water activity of the formulation at levels of from about 0.94 to about 0.98 when exposed to air at 70% relative humidity and 25°C for 24 hours.
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one substance is chosen from water-retentive polymers.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the at least one substance is chosen from water-retentive polymers that are gel-forming polymers.
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one substance is chosen from humectants.
5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the humectant is chosen from glycerol, polyethylene glycol, soluble collagen, and sorbitol.
6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the carrier comprises at least one water-retentive polymer and at least one humectant.
7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one substance is chosen from water-retentive polymers and the formulation further comprises ~~a UV~~ an ultraviolet protectant.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one substance is chosen from humectants ~~and~~ and the formulation further comprises a ~~UV~~ an ultraviolet protectant.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the formulation further comprises a ~~UV~~ an ultraviolet protectant.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the entomopathogenic nematodes are of the family Steinernematidae or Heterorhabditidae.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the entomopathogenic nematodes are symbiotically associated with Enterobacteriaceae bacteria.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes have enhanced survival after application to soil or plants as compared to entomopathogenic nematodes that have not been desiccated.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes are third-stage infective juveniles.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the entomopathogenic nematodes have been partially desiccated by placing said nematodes in environments of progressively-decreasing relative humidity or aqueous solutions of progressively-increasing concentrations of glycerol.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the formulation is applied to foliage of the plant.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the formulation is applied by spraying.

18. (Previously Presented) A formulation for protecting plants from insects, comprising:

- a) partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes, and
- b) a carrier comprising water and a substance for maintaining the water activity of the formulation at levels of from about 0.94 to about 0.98 when exposed to air at 70% relative humidity and 25°C for 24 hours; and

wherein said formulation is a liquid or gel.

19. (Previously Presented) The formulation of claim 18, wherein the substance is a water-retentive polymer, a humectant, or a combination of a water-retentive polymer and a humectant.

20. (Previously Presented) The formulation of claim 18, further comprising an ultraviolet protectant.

21. (Previously Presented) A formulation for protecting plants from insects, comprising:

- a) partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes having a water activity of between 0.950 and 0.980, and
- b) a carrier comprising water and a substance for maintaining the water activity of the formulation at levels between about 0.940 and 0.980 when exposed to air at 70% relative humidity and 25°C for 24 hours, wherein said substance is a humectant or a water-retentive polymer or both; and

wherein said formulation is a liquid or gel and has a water activity of from about 0.940 to about 0.980.

22. (Withdrawn) A method of preserving nematodes comprising:

suspending viable nematodes in a solution having a water activity of from about 0.94 to about 0.98.

23. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 22, wherein the solution comprises at least one of water-retentive polymers and humectants.

24. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 23, wherein the solution comprises at least one water-retentive polymer.

25. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 24, wherein the water-retentive polymer is a gel-forming polymer.

26. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 25, wherein the gel-forming polymer is chosen from agaroses, carbopols, carrageenans, dextrans, guar gums, and gellan gums.

27. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 23, wherein the solution comprises at least one humectant.

28. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 27, wherein the humectant is chosen from glycerol, polyethylene glycol, soluble collagen, Folicote, Norbak, sorbitol, Rodspray, and Nufilm.

29. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 28, wherein the humectant comprises glycerol.

30. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 29, wherein the solution comprises about 25% or less glycerol by weight.

31. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one substance comprises at least one water-retentive polymer and at least one humectant.